PROBLEMS OF, BACKGROUND TO, AND QUESTIONS FOR A LABOR PERSPECTIVE --
WITH SOME BEGINNINGS   By S. Wier

Preface

My failure to get this document out sooner forced upon Brian
Mackenzie the task of getting out his document with little notice and
in a very brief span of time. This is my apology and statement of high
regard for his ability and sense of committment to us all. To produce
a labor perspectives document under such pressure is at best an impos-
ition. I consider the outcome, however, a fortunate one for upon read-
ing it I have found no decisive disagreement. This document is not in-
tended to be in opposition to it, but rather a general background to it
in the main. I will try to indicate whatever specific differences I
have if time allows. It may be that he and others will find disagree-
ment with ideas and formulations in this piece. I hope that he or they
will be able to find time to comment on them in writing. If not, those
differences or any that I have not yet recognized will have to come out
in the discussion during the convention and that which continues there-
after.

I.   A Discussion of the Backlog of Problems and Background

A.   American socialists who have not been isolated from working
class life have always been among the staunchest and most consistent
defenders and builders of labor unions. At the same time that they
have built and defended, they have sought to increase the degree of
rank and file control within the unions and over the top strata of of-
ficial leaders in particular. In return, they have not asked for or
expected organizational power within the unions, as has been the gen-
eral rule with the Communists for over forty years. At the same time
they did not work "for free" like the social democrats during the last
six decades, slavishly subordinating the needs of the ranks and their
socialist ideas to the needs of the labor officialdom, thereby becoming
absorbed into the bureaucracy. American socialists who have functioned
independent of any bureaucracy or establishment anywhere inside or out-
side the unions have asked for the rights due any union member and no
more: the right to employment and to put forth their ideas freely a-
mong those with whom they work and within the unions.

B.   In most instances independent socialists have avoided taking
policy making and administrative offices within unions unless and un-
til the ranks of the union were fully aware of their socialist politics
and the kind of battle it might be necessary for them (the ranks) to
wage as a consequence of electing a socialist officer. "From below"
socialists learned that the only union positions they could possibly
maintain as militants was that of steward involved in the day to day
struggle to maintain working conditions and on-the-job dignity (and;
even then they have found that the job of steward often entails some
separation from the ranks). They did not do this out of either a sense
of heroics or of martyrdom. Rather it was out of an immediate as well
as long range sense of responsibility to the people who elected them,

to the working class as a whole and to themselves, for the unions remain the only formal organizations that can defend the interests of the workers to any degree. As Marxists they have been aware that it is unlikely in the extreme that organizations which could in any real way do the necessary tasks now performed by unions will appear under capitalism.

C. Socialists of this tradition have known too that in a country whose mass political parties are based in the employer rather than the working class, the function of the unions goes far beyond their potential ability to protect economic and working conditions. The unions have been as they are now, the only forums, actual or potential, that workers have for the discussion and spread of ideas from one workplace to another. And, it has been the same socialists who have been unafraid of rank and file initiative and democracy who have not held back on the presentation of an idea that the needs of a struggle called forth because it might be unpopular. They have seen that their union brothers and sisters are quite able to accept the presentation of unpopular ideas from people they have come to respect and who have some humility. In fact, socialists have found that in time they won the highest kind of respect, even when they have met with disagreement, precisely because of their honesty and their confidence in the people to whom they put forth ideas. Finally here, the presence of respected socialists in the American labor movement has in the past made it possible for many beyond their number to realize the value of the existence of radical organizations in the general community without having to wait for the crush of objective conditions to bring that consciousness to the fore.

D. The IS seeks to continue this honorable tradition that is sketched in brief just above. We urge it upon all radicals as a foundation for building into the future. It was developed out of the lessons and experience of almost a century of American socialism, Marxism, and anarcho-syndicalism. The retrospection allowed by the 1950's and 1960's has made possible its sifting in order to cull out at least some of its major mistakes. Because it is a tradition and especially because it is a tradition in the selective sense of the world, it can serve as no more than a guide. It does not and cannot by itself equip us for the future. The body of theory, perspectives and program on which this tradition was built was in large part developed during the period of radical expansion in the 1930's. Few fundamental changes have been made in it since that time that involved any degree of wide scale discussion and full scale testing.

E. Socialists who share this same good tradition can today therefore be expected to develop considerable differences as they confront specific problems within the labor movement. None of the socialist groups including our own have made applied evaluations and analyses of three decades of vast change. We do not have a body of theory that speaks or admits to it. In turn, this threatens the very existence of the tradition.

F. At the same time we do not precipitously jettison anything
that has been developed by us in the past. We respect our past. But
we respond to the present and to change or we become disoriented. Ours
must be a constant process of testing, of retaining what stands test,
and rejecting that which fails. Our basic body of theory has gone too
long without full test or examination. It has become untagged baggage
that does not always reach any destination at the same time we do. Our
failure to conduct intensive discussion out of which could come an up-
to-date body of theory in all areas and particularly on the labor move-
ment in the United States and Canada has already caused us deep wounds.
There is no one to blame but circumstance and history, no one, that is
up until now. We cannot blame ourselves for the period of near demise
of organized Third Camp socialism on this continent during the Fifties
and early Sixties. But now we have a new start, a new lease on life
because of rebellion among the youth, racial and ethnic groups, and
women, and because of the upturn in confidence of the working class
that sparked into the open in the mid-Sixties. Then too, the Reorient
split has put us on warning: "dig into theory or die." If we fail to
do this now the blame rests squarely with us all, as a group and as
individuals.

Without the guidelines made possible by the existence of a basic
body of theory in which we have all participated in arriving at, we
have no choice but to react to each situation from the gut, empirical-
ly. Under these circumstances there is no such thing as "a line" in
the best sense of the term. What is contained in an article in our
press will depend too many times on the individual who writes it. What
our people do in practical situations in the field will depend upon
the individuals and localized conditions. Differences between us will
get fought out first in the process of practical work in the arena
rather than internal discussion. Having arisen in such a way, differ-
ences cannot be handled democratically, allowing the maintenance of
any freedom or mutual respect. Discipline, in the worst sense of the
term, then inevitably rears up as a seeming substitute, but it is no
more than a sidetrack to monolithism.

G. There is yet another aspect to this problem. The older so-
cialists among us at times may appear less handicapped by the lack of
a basic body of theory. Their experience and knowledge of the tradi-
tions equips them with their own set of guidelines. Our newer people,
the vast majority, get little aid from this. They are pushed to be-
come overly dependent upon a few leaders "at the top." Resentment is
bound to result. The basic theories, now necessarily eclectic, that
the leadership operates upon are not the same as their own. They had
no hand in developing or formulating them. Or, let us look at the
problem as it has arisen already in the practical arenas. As recent-
ly as a year ago before any number of our newer people had the benefit
of direct experience in the unions, they were naturally forced to oper-
ate on the basis of their previous experience. The explosion of radi-
calism among the young during the last decade was in general a response
against outworn values and institutions that no longer mesh with the
reality of life. Specifically, however, it was a rebellion against

bureaucracies and bureaucratic conservatism. When numbers of young
radicals left the university communities and turned toward the working
class they found the same sort of resistance to creative change in
the labor bureaucracy that they had found in university administrators.
As could have been expected, they reacted strongly.

   H. The relationship of the union member to a union official is
far more complex than that of the student to a chancellor or dean.
There is both a duality and a dichotomy in the former relationship.
Union members suffer from the irresponsiveness of their union offi-
cials, but in the last analysis they can through their albeit inade-
quate franchise change the course of unions or destroy the careers of
the officials. Students can have this effect on university officials,
however, only through repeated direct confrontations. The unions do
in some areas protect workers from employers. The university as an
institution more than anything else treats students like an employing
institution treats workers -- in the absence of a union. It is natu-
ral that young radicals who experienced more defeats than victories
in the fights with university bureaucrats would be impatient to find
quick new ways to deal with the labor bureaucrats. No more than two
years ago some of our own people did not even want to discuss any anal-
ysis of the unions or the officials that did not call for placing the
top strata of officials in the camp of the enemy in every situation.
They felt it was necessary for all strategy and tactics to call for a
direct attack on the officialdom at all times. Anyone who proposed
any other course was viewed as someone who had to a degree given up
the good fight. Thus, because of the intensity with which these
young radicals wanted to deal with the decisive manifestation of the
overly prolonged existence of capitalism, they unwittingly contributed
to the creation of an atmosphere of distrust. It may be true that
some of the older and more experienced of our people and members re-
cently departed were or are not sensitive enough about the need to
fight the bureaucrats, but it is presently impossible to be certain
about that or the degree to which that may be true because the IS has
not embarked upon a full discussion of the role of the labor bureau-
cracy. The contribution of our older people to the atmosphere of un-
certainty and distrust was their failure, for whatever reasons, to
initiate that full theoretical discussion. And it was that failure,
again putting aside the reasons, that was primary to our crisis. If
we had had such a discussion could we have avoided the bitter out-
break between ourselves and the Reorient people over practical union
tactics? It is impossible to determine whether or not the Reorient
split could have been avoided altogether, but it is highly probably
that the breakdown of internal political life was a major contributor
to it. Isn't it also highly probable that the breakdown in question
called forth and created the unnecessarily precipitous differences
over "struggle groups" and the "labor party" slogan? The question
is rhetorical.

   I. In the year that has passed since the Reorient split our peo-
ple have gained a great deal of valuable practical experience. Al-
ready that experience has eased our crisis, but it cannot solve it.

Empiricism is never enough. As Marxists we have the tools to rise
above it if we will but use them. The initiation of full and contin-
ued theoretical discussion will at one and the same time remove our
present crisis and enable us to maintain the best relationship with
the people in ISCO. They are no longer members of the IS, but they
should be kept informed of the ideas that develop out of our discus-
sion and we should remain in discussion with them.

    J.   The discussion of theory in relation to the labor movement
and the working class at our forthcoming convention and the current
discussion leading up to it should be viewed as no more than the open-
ing of the discussion that will again arm us with a basic body of the-
ory on which to base our day to day activity. We will, however, need
to adopt guidelines on which to operate between this convention and
the next one. It is true that no socialist movement in our tradition
has ever made claim to having a "finished line," and we must hold to
that single truth. But we must now place extreme emphasis on the
axiom which holds that: "No socialist party or group should ever have
'a line' that is considered to be more than the hypotheses that it is
currently putting to the furthest possible test." A body of theory
cannot be put together in a matter of months, let alone weeks. Our
people have only recently begun to have the advantage of being able
to make direct observations and tests in the practical arenas. The
content of those observations and tests, past and future, must become
integral to our discussion. We must therefore operate on the as-
sumption that whatever we adopt at our immediate convention has a ten-
tative quality; that it is even more subject to change than program-
matic points adopted by a socialist organization that has already ex-
perienced some years of thorough theoretical debate.

    K.   At this point in the history and development of the IS, pro-
viding we successfully launch full scale and extended discussion,
there is more than normal chance that minorities will become majori-
ties and vice versa during the period between conventions. This dic-
tates that we be ever more vigilant in facilitating the airing of
minority views both at and between conventions. The majority has the
full advantage of our press to air its views to our public. But the
press must be open to the minorities as well. That can be handled
simply by telling our public that the published articles of the minor-
ity are just that. It can be done with elaborate explanation to demon-
strate the democratic character of the IS or it can be done with one
published word, "Opinion," or five, "This is a Discussion Article."
If we do not do this we not only fail the democratic test, but we
monolithically fail to extend our discussion to our public and get
the benefit of their opinion and knowledge.

    L.   Neither do we attempt to stop minorities from giving the full-
lest possible test to their hypotheses in the public arenas, including
recruitment to the IS on the basis of those hypotheses. We require
full adherence to discipline from political minorities in the follow-
ing ways: (1) That when they raise their views in public they make

it clear that their views do not represent those of the majority within the IS. (2) That they air their views as fully as possible first of all in the IS fractions or responsible committees. (3) That their differences with the majority be kept out in the open and on an ideological basis. And, (4) that they inform people they are recruiting to the IS of the majority position(s).

    M. We do not need alot of tight and detailed rules to handle the question of differences among us. If we have those tight rules then in a short time we will have little disagreement in the IS, for all those who differed will have been expelled or have walked out in disgust. We need only general guide lines to handle the question of political divisions among us. Although the question cannot be elaborated in full detail here, the best discipline and only real discipline in relation to this problem is that which arises out of full discussion and consequent understanding and which is scrupulously followed by both majorities and minorities. (The majority gets the biggest share of access to all publications and leading offices. Minorities get their share of those offices and the press is not closed to them. The minorities thus see that it is possible for them to become a majority in the future. Only under these conditions, when both majority and minority or minorities feel that the arrangement is the best possible for both or all, are they willing to sustain relationships.) The resulting discipline comes primarily from an inner compulsion. The people of the majority can then say to themselves: "The organization is bigger, stronger, and healthier because of the minorities presence." And the minority is able to say: "They are not imposing on us anything that restricts our ability to develop or test our ideas." Each gives the other a bigger audience. Each forces the other to test its ideas more thoroughly. Ideally, our top leadership should contain within itself its own (ideological) negation. Ideally, because of the constancy of change minorities should appear in the top cadres first of all, and shrink or grow to be majorities there first of all. Because this does not always occur, socialist movements of the IS tradition have always gone out of their way to make the personnel on their top committees representative of the main ideological divisions within the organization so that the contrast and test of ideas goes on throughout the period between conventions.

    N. Without full discussion of theory internally that in a sensible way gets carried to our public via our press, majorities and minorities begin to treat each other as enemies both internally and in public. When this happens we are on our way to another split crisis. Arguments sink to the level of who fired the first shot or who is "mushy-headed" or whatever. Moreover, some begin to try to judge others on the basis of "how active" they are. This usually begins with the majority. It is the nature of overly restricted minorities to be less active in public arenas than the majority. By the very fact of their untested differences they are not as integrated or as focused on external activities. Congenitally all minorities in their early stages particularly, find it necessary to spend a great deal of their time trying to work out their ideas. If our organization does not

have an active political (theoretical) life then minorities are denied
that necessity. Quite naturally it is difficult for some within the
majority to see the value of the minority if the organization does
not have the facilities for demonstrating that value. Even the most
sectarian of minorities perform the valuable function of reminding the
majority of general truths that they have overlooked or neglected.
In many instances it will be seen that it is the people of the minori-
ties who do the most reading and research in source areas not sought
out by people of the majority. The obvious value of this aside, whether
it is appreciated at the time or not, is that minorities force ideo-
logical stimulation and test. Without them an organization is on its
way to losing all vitality.

        O. An active internal political life and avoiding the specie of
discipline that gives minorities freedom to test their hypotheses on-
ly in the abstraction of internal discussion -- is the only way we
can avoid the blinding, humorless drowning and unhappy internal life
that comes before and after splits. That sort of discipline, which
became fully developed in the Stalinist movement, guarantees that mi-
norities will begin to operate separately if not secretively and then
leave or be expelled. It is as suicidal as the informal organization-
al discipline practiced by the Socialist Party. There is no point in
a group (or individual) remaining in either the Communist Party or the
Socialist Party if it develops serious differences with the majority.
The former handles differences by total legislation, the latter by the
lack of any systematic guidelines at all. One leads to an ideological
cul de sac, the other to a blind alley.

        P. The IS is not only interested in the fullest testing of hy-
potheses of both majorities and minorities that hopefully develop
within its ranks and leadership from time to tim, it wants the full
benefit of knowledge of the outcome of those tests. If in a particu-
lar practical arena there are serious differences among IS members,
then there should be regular systematized reporting of (by persons
representing the different views) the successes and failures that oc-
cur around the ideas that created the differences. What if, for ex-
ample, one or a group of our people in a union favor a different set
of candidates for top union office from those favored by the majority
of our people? What harm is there in that person or group coming out
for the slate they favor if they feel it is necessary for them to do
so? People who are close to us will come to us and ask why we differ.
Is that what we fear? Is it our opinion that workers are turned off
by organizations that allow differences of opinion? Or, does organi-
zational unanimity speed healthy growth? When we differ in public we
astutely, if we are in the majority, let it be known that ours is the
type of organization that encourages differences of opinion; that our
point of view is that of the majority and the other represents a mi-
nority. If we are in a minority status of any kind we do the same in
the same manner, indicating our disagreement with the majority posi-
tions. For people interested in development of socialism from below
the situation provides capital, not obstacle. It stimulates interest
and can be used to accrue prestige for the IS. And what if it turns

out that the slate of the minority is the better slate? Our close pub-
lic would then be aware that the minority was right in this particular
situation and would increase its prestige. It would still be prestige
for the IS. The minority here serves the function of saving the organ-
ization from the embarrassment or worse of having unanimously backed
the wrong slate.

Q. Let us take a different aspect of this problem. What is to
be gained by demanding that a minority in a practical situation re-
cruit on the basis of the ideas of the majority? Nothing. In fact,
we can only lose. Internally, could we really respect anyone who is
capable of peddling ideas they seriously disagree with and who, no
matter with what pain, are able to compartmentalize their intellectual
integrity? Workers will settle this problem for us if we want them to
Let any of our people go out and try to recruit on the basis of ideas
for which they have no enthusiasm and heartily disagree with, and
their lack of conviction will be smelled from a mile away. Deny any
political minority the right to function creatively and they will
leave as any individual or group that has dignity should. If the
minority of this -- particular year or decade -- stays to recruit to
the ideas that separate them from the majority as well as those on
which they agree with the majority, then and only then does the majori-
ty obtain opportunity for extended exposure to the recruits and a
chance to win them. With this proper freedom, if a minority fails to
be able to recruit to its position or stimulate serious interest in
it, it is fair indication that there is a failure. The failure may
not be total or disastrous. It may only be in formulation. Then
again it may mean the need to drop, in part or whole, the ideas cre-
ating separation from the majority. And, if the propensity for subject-
ivity has been avoided by full discussion, the majority will have in-
creased its strength. The same sort of self interest argument can be
made for either majority or minority. The point is, however, that no
matter whether this question is approached from the point of view of
self-interest, morality, opportunism, or scientific integrity, the
above described combination of freedom and control is what is called
for.

R. In part, the IS is a movement in which there is not a gener-
al atmosphere of warmth and humor to compliment its existing serious-
ness. We have branches where the attendance of meetings is a chore
to be endured. Fun and real socializing is out of the question. A
joke or laughter not at someone else's expense is rare. It is part
of a vicious, circular, and self-devouring process. It sends people
into the practical arena already prone to disagree or with little de-
velopment of the friendship that can be such an aid to functioning.
Must a young movement such as ours await the day when large numbers of
our people are veterans of common and major battles of the class strug-
gle in order for there to be a sense of camaraderie in or organiza-
tion? The answer is no. A preliminary step and a prerequisite step
can be taken now. The convention just ahead can begin the process of
understanding which unleashes compassion. Rather than starting by
trying to first divine areas of agreement and disagreement, we can
start by giving thorough examination to the changes that have occurred

since the Third Camp movement in the United States and Canada last had
an active theoretical life, unafraid of abstractions or practical test/

II. The Backlog of Change Neglected by the Socialist Movement
in the United States

1. The industrial union revolution of 1932 to 1941, out of which
the CIO was born, allowed American radicals a very high degree of
identification with the official organizations and leadership of the
labor unions. Communist, Socialist, Trotskyist and anarcho-syndica-
list parties and groups, each in almost exact ratio to their size,
had members who became official labor leaders, or who became influential
advisors to new official leaders. Particularly from the time of the
outbreak of general strikes in San Francisco and Minneapolis, through
the inception of the CIO (first as a committee within the AFL and then
as an independent federation) to the time of the outbreak of World War
II, alliances between radical intellectuals, rank and file workers,
and a new generation of labor officials came easily. Most often with
different goals, though there were many illusions to the contrary,
they had agreement on one major issue: industrial unionism as an in-
stitution was a progressive development. The alliances were unique
and short lived, but it was under the influence of this period that the
American radical movement last developed a full set of attitudes and
theories on the labor movement.

Now, thirty years almost to the day, after the close of that per-
iod, there is no ideological basis for a healthy or ongoing relation-
ship between the ranks and the officialdom of labor. And, it has been
so many years since radicals have been a presence within the unions
that it is difficult for them to learn and articulate clearly the ideo-
logical basis for the historically demanded realliance between them-
selves and the ranks. The once fresh and progressive young workers
who rose from the ranks to the top positions of leadership in many of
the unions have long since succumbed to bureaucratic conservatism.

The depth of the bureaucratic degeneration of the labor leader-
ship and the speed with which the bureaucratization process occurred
is a principal, and in some cases the principal, cause of demoraliza-
tion, skepticism and cynicism among labor militants and socialists --
former, present, and potential. Without a full theoretical analysis
of the causes of past examples of bureaucratic degeneration and a pos-
itive prognosis for the future that is scientifically based, social-
ists appear to operate on no more than impressionistic assertions of
faith in the working class. The volume of cynical academic literature
on the question of bureaucracy grows, undealt with by socialists. So-
cialists seem unaware that works like Robert Michels', Political
Parties, given ever new life by the works of Seymour Martin Lipset,
provide a formidable challenge to the very foundations of working
class socialism as long as they remain unanswered. In fact, the
tenets -- both implied and explicit -- upon which the writings of
Lipset and Michels are based have almost biblical importance for those

who live in the ignorance that bureaucratism is an eternal inevitability. This crisis alone provides a major task for socialists and their theoretical publications. Failure to attack it means failure to win respect and support in the intellectual community.

2. From the outset of the industrial union revolution the followers of the Communist Party in the labor unions set the tone for radicals. Their primary focus was on obtaining official power in the unions. The Marxist and other radical tendencies separated themselves from the Communists mainly by their adherence to the democratic principles of internal union government and their lack of opportunism, but their focus was still on obtaining official power for themselves or independent militants. The entire process was aided by the fact that rank and file militants were themselves focused primarily on the problem of who would obtain power over formal and official union bodies. It was natural that this should be their concentration because (1) official union machinery was needed just to make the new unions operative, (2) the unions were new in many industries and there were widespread and panacean illusions about what they could accomplish, and (3) the power of the informal work group organizations in the work place was at a peak and they were able to exercise a gread deal of control over the formal local union structures.*

But the industrial union revolution did not institutionalize around the goals and aspirations that were foremost in the minds of the workers who made it. The primary motivation for industrial unions in labor's ranks came out of the alienation and indignities that workers experienced on the job. Almost spontaneously it seemed, they formed unions in the work place, but they were dealing for the most part with nationwide corporations. The power of the local unions in each workplace had to be centralized in order to keep the employers from playing off the workers in one workplace against the workers making the same product in another. The major fight to humanize working conditions had to be postponed until nationwide contracts were obtained. This facilitated the transfer of local autonomy to the top union leaders in the international headquarters. The postponement, with the aid of World War II, has lasted for more than a generation. The outbreak of rank and file revolts in the early 1960's served notice on a now case-hardened bureaucracy that the ranks intended to resume the fight to win dignity at work.

Disillusioned with their unions though not about to reject them, rank and file militants are today not focused primarily upon obtaining power per se within the formal union governmental structure. They have learned that that is not the means to the end they seek. Instead they often bypass that power fight and seek a direct and radical expansion of their powers or democratic rights in the total collective bargaining process. They want autonomy over the grievance procedure, the choice of bargaining goals and contract administration. Thus far,

*This point will be more carefully analyzed in a separate document.

the main tactics that they have employed to pressure for these goals
have been voting against the acceptance of contracts negotiated by
their leaders and wildcat strikes. At times these have assumed a mass
character, particularly as regards the former tactic. Neither of the
tactics has been coordinated on a regional or national level in more
than a handful of instances, and even then the coordination has not
come out of strong centralized organization. No large scale progress
toward the goals have been made. Dozens and dozens of local unions
within an international have elected rebel delegates to conventions
and again because of the lack of regional or national coordination
little advance has been made. Does progress await the formation of
stronger local rank and file caucuses whose power is then centralized
nationally? Hundreds of locals have elected new and more militant
leaders from the ranks. It has helped but has been insufficient to
achieve the needed degree of change. Is the problem again the lack of
coordination of revolt on a national basis? If so, the task of mili-
tants is somewhat simplified and is one of building and waiting, seek-
ing to win power locally and trying to parlay that power by trying to
unite rebel locals on a regional and then a national basis. The task
would then be to use that power to put collective bargaining to work
improving working conditions and real wages, rather than the distorted
purposes the leadership put it to after winning multi-plant or multi-
employer contracts. This view can only lead militants to resume the
power struggles of the Thirties, albeit for different ends. It in-
cludes and speaks to only a small part of the change that has taken
place in three decades.

    3. When collective bargaining institutionalizes, unions undergo
qualitative changes ideologically, administratively, and even struc-
turally. Bargaining did not institutionalize for the new unions of
the 1930's with the signing of their first contracts. The process of
bargaining could not routinize and solidify for any one of the new
mass unions as long as any one of the major corporations in the indus-
try they were organizing held out and sustained a threat to the rest
of their contracts. Also, the first of the major contracts obtained
in steel, auto, rubber, or electric, for example, were most often
documents guaranteeing little more than union recognition. Signatures
were applied, but the corporations in most cases continued to resist
the process and open conflict continued. In the steel industry the
first real breakdown of resistance became noticeable after Germany's
invasion of Poland in 1939. That tragic act caused a flood of orders
for American steel from as yet uninvaded European countries. The cri-
sis that the steel employers had experienced in 1938 was ended. The
first real breakthrough and establishment of a contract more nearly
resembling the detailed contracts of today was not accomplished until
the signing of the Carnegie-Illinois contract in late 1941. And, the
rest of the steel corporations did not follow suit until the early
years after formal American entry into the war.

    The story was in general the same in auto, rubber, and electrical
appliances. The differences can be measured by matters of months.
The sitdown period in rubber did not end until 1938. Slim contracts
were won at Sieberling (U.S. Royal in Detroit) and Goodrich and General.

Firestone continued resistance. Goodyear held out altogether and not
until it was put under contract in 1941, could the top leadership of
the Rubberworkers begin to achieve stability in their lives. Collec-
tive bargaining rights were won at General Motors as a result of the
1937 Flint sitdowns. Ford held out until 1940, and it is likely that
old Henry Ford and Harry Bennett would have resisted even longer were
it not for the fact that NLRB investigators, most of them former mem-
bers of the LaFollete Senate Investigating Committee staff, had uncov-
ered evidence indicating Ford's use of Detroit's organized gangsters
to fight union organization. In electric a contract was won with Gen-
eral Electric as early as 1938, but it was not until the early years of
the war that the industry became organized in a substantial way.

      At the beginning of World War II the majority of American top la-
bor officials gathered before Franklin Roosevelt like "feudal princes
offering their services to a king," and most of the leaders of the new
unions were among them. The restrictions of wartime that were imposed
upon the ranks of labor freed the leadership to complete the organiza-
tion process begun by the ranks, but on a bureaucratic basis. Institu-
tionalization of collective bargaining thus occurred on the worst
terms. Compulsory arbitration of grievances became a general pattern
through the initiatives of the War Labor Board that labor accepted
seats on. The degenerative socialization process that labor officials
undergo was cemented in a tripartite arrangement between official la-
bor, employers, and government bureaucrats. However, it is incorrect
to conclude that the war was the major culprit. Its function was to
accelerate the negative process that goes into high gear with the in-
stitutionalization of bargaining.

      The atmosphere in and character of local unions in particular dur-
ing the initial organizing period is one of conflict. The new self or-
ganized federal locals of the early 1930's and the new and often self
organized locals of the CIO a few years later had a character that, for
America and Canada of that time, could almost be described as revolu-
tionary. Open battle and constant confrontation were the methods of
the employers and in turn of the workers. The sitdown strikes and mass
slowdowns were the more dramatic of the tactics used by the members
and leaders of the new locals. Equally, if not more important were
the mass meetings held on company property, in parking lots, company
cafeterias, and even on the workplace floor. The confidence and sense
of security made possible by the very physical nature of these meet-
ings freed the participants to release the depth of their feelings
about their work and their employers and to put forth and consider
the most radical and sophisticated of ideas. The early memorandums
of union recognition and minimal wage and seniority awards could not
immediately cause great change in the attitudes of the ranks or change
the character of their locals. The formal contractual victories only
whetted appetites for ever greater ones. The momentum of "just yes-
terday" could not easily be stopped. A new consciousness was growing.
Moreover, the employers regularly reneged on conditions they had agreed
to or began new campaigns to quash the drive of the workers. This
necessitated immediate returns to direct action by the workers. Only

when the employers recognized that they no longer had the needed legitimacy to act as the full disciplinarians of the people in their employ and that the union leadership could be used as a substitute disciplinary force, were they willing to join in the building of the institution of collective bargaining. The beginnings of qualitative change in the character of the unions from international to the regional and finally to the local level, followed upon this fact.

The process by which union leaders became disciplinarians of the rank and file need not and seldom does involve conscious and overt dishonest conduct at the start. The process becomes a natural one once the employers decide that it is possible for them to live with the unions. The establishment of systematized collective bargaining and "full range" contracts is usually viewed as the cure for most if not all current problems by both ranks and leaders of labor. Unavoidably the hope grows that it will allow the making of gains against the employers without the constant conflict, insecurity, and disruption of personal and family lives that characterize the organizing period for new unions. For the ranks it is an illusion that must soon vanish. Routine and home life and income may become more stable after bargaining is institutionalized, but the conflict at work goes on. Grievance bargaining that denies the right to strike at the local level mutes it and makes it less explosive. There is no record or official admission of its existence unless the production process stopped. There is even a pretense that some major slowdowns or brief wildcats did not occur, after they have been ended, in the new world of make-believe that is created, bargaining under unconditional no-strike pledges and compulsory grievance arbitration. It takes some time, however, to intimidate the ranks into an acceptance of that make-believe world.

As soon as the employers accept collective bargaining as a fact of life and their signatures are put on contracts that they do not intend to break in other than a piecemeal way, the labor leadership particularly at the top must of necessity undergo a full change in attitude. For a time they may remain bitterly angry at some or all of the employers or their representatives, but they must now show concern about the employers competitive position. The successful delivery of all the things in the contract that have for so long been striven for cannot be made unless the firms under contract prosper and grow. The open and total conflict relationship of the pre-contract days has to go. Now, a care has to be shown for how hard an employer is to be hit. The situation demands "flexibility" and an attentiveness to what the limits are or "you might kill the goose that lays the eggs." The rank and file by its very size and the nature of the condition in the workplace cannot, of course, be expected to show the needed care. Decision-making powers in the grievance procedure must therefore be placed outside the reach of the ranks and in the hands of the union officials who are responsible for the administration of the contract so that those grievances, which -- if won -- would set precedents to undermine the competitive position, can be watered down or discarded.

The ranks, however, do not share the change in attitude of their
leaders. They too want to retain and maintain the contracts, but they
see no reason for pulling back from a struggle to win a grievance that
is legitimate. Their method for fighting a grievance is one of contin-
ued battle until won or lost. For moments at a time in the meetings
down at the union hall it is possible for them to see the logic of their
leaders on the necessity to keep the company in business. That reason
is destroyed the moment that they physically or mentally return to
work. The attitude of the company toward them is one of total antago-
nism and disrespect whenever the production process is in motion.
Schizophrenia cannot live in a reality where there is so much immediate
pain and unhappiness. For each one of them and their immediate asso-
ciates the task becomes how to cheat the employer of what is expected.
If the company survives it will have to come from the labors of the
others in the workplace besides themselves. The local level leaders
developed during the organizing period find it difficult to act in any
way or any longer as a link to the top leaders. If they continue to
work daily in the production process they share the attitudes of the
people who elected them. Even if they are freed from work, it is they,
the local leaders, that the ranks will move against first in a show-
down, and not the leaders at the regional or international level.
They must stay with the ranks in order to survive and save their souls.

The union administrators of the contract at the top cannot toler-
ate this situation. "Yes, the work is hard and the damned foremen
and supervisors of the companies are so stupid that they continue to
cause our people to be boiled up, but can't they see that if they con-
tinue in bullheaded battle that the contract and all that they fought
for will be lost?" The ranks will have to be disciplined. The hot-
test heads among the leaders must come around to a reasonable atti-
tude or be eliminated. "It is a hell of a thing to have to do, par-
ticularly after all the hard work that those guys did, in fact, with-
out some of them we never could have done the job in the first place .
. . but a few cannot be allowed to stand in the way of the welfare of
the many. . .this afterall is the real world." And for the leadership
it is, if the contract is to survive under existing relationships. It
is true that when workers in a workplace begin to make justifiable in-
roads on the ability of their employer to exploit them that they can
put that employer in an uncompetitive position, or make it difficult
or impossible for that employer to become competitive.

So unassailable was the new logic of the new bureaucrats new
world during the transition period that was the early 1940's, that
they spoke openly about their new role due to the existence of con-
tracts. So without alternatives were they that it did not occur to
them to show shame. In 1942, Clinton Golden and Harold Ruttenberg
wrote a book titled, The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy. In it
they describe in detail how the leadership of the Steel Workers union
dealt with militant leaders who resisted compromise. The book is a
unique document not only because of its contents, but because Golden

was at that time the veteran director of the Eastern Region of the
Steel Workers Organizing Committee and Ruttenberg was the educational
director of the entire union. The title they chose to give their book
provides some indication of their ignorant innocence. Their self image
was a good one. They were key figures in the building of a giant union
that was going to benefit and had already benefited hundreds of thou-
sands. Their ends, both present and potential, for them justified any
means. The social-political value of their long out of print document
has increased with time, yet it is forgotten except by students of
management. In the wisdom of our retrospection it seems incredible
that not one organization on the left has ever grasped it for the tre-
mendous educational tool that it is. It is probable that it was passed
over because even the most top flight of revolutionaries are prone to
resist recognition that a period of peak revolutionary activity is past
and that a transition period of Thermidorian reaction has begun.

    The outward pacification of the rank and file requires that the
official power center of the union have control over all staff jobs.
There is no easier way to remove a dangerously "hotheaded" militant
from a sensitive area than to appeal to his or her sense of responsi-
bility to the larger struggle. And so rank and file militants with
roots deep in their native workplaces accepted organizing jobs that
took them considerable geographic and psychological distances from
their home bases. But though the number of staff jobs is relatively
large it is never enough to allow the officials to divert the militan-
cy of more than several score at a time. The staffs of the Auto and
Steel Workers are each just under one thousand and the workhorses on
that staff can only carry a limited number of newcomers at one time.
Thus, other avenues have to be found for handling militants who resist
making the transition to the Thermidor and beyond. It is at this point
that sections of the union leadership enter into collusive relation-
ships with the employers. Employers are always in need of talent to
fill management vacancies. The recruitment of a rank and file leader
not only removes a thorn, but usually provides management with someone
of top capabilities and energy. No one on the union side need ask them
to conduct these raids. The corruption of the union results when by
its silence it gives tacit approval to them.

    Neither is it necessary for union officials to make formal arrange-
ments with management in order to designate a rank and file leader
that they would like to see removed from the job. A staffer comes
into the local and baits a particular militant. The news leaks back
to management. It is during this aspect of the reaction process that
the fearful, the conservative, and opportunistic rank and filers re-
ceive, signal, and come forth as an alternative leadership to the one
that organized the local. Even the names of the bulk of the workplace
heroines and heroes of the industrial union revolution have been lost
to us. The new and more conservative local leaders are the ones who
survive to accept credit for the gains made by the formation of the
unions. They are generally and except in periods of rank and file as-
sertiveness in debt to officials on the staff and thus are in a weak

position in relation to the employer. They owe their new office and status to their willingness to concede local autonomy in the bargaining and internal governmental apparatus to the upper echelons of the union. In short and in a sense, they are willing to abide by Bonapartist relationships, they are willing to see whatever change and reform that occurs be initiated bureaucratically from above.

The transtition caused by the turnabout of purpose of the labor leadership that was necessitated by the agreement of the employers to institutionalize collective bargaining, in time instills the leadership with contempt for the ranks. Add in the guilt that has appeared half-recognized and unadmitted and all the ingredients for a recipe for cynicism are present. Ingestion of it for any extended period frees the leadership to exploit their new position to in turn improve their economic and social status. Externally or internally, there is no longer anything present to help ward off full infection by the virus of bureaucratic conservatism. Kafka-esque metamorphoses occur. Consciously corrupt elitism can now be pursued.

The establishment of contracts with what appear to be comprehensive grievance procedures establishes a formal dual power within an industrial type local union. Now not only is there an entire set of officers headed by the president, vice president, treasurer, and recording secretary, all holding offices divorced from the workplace and process, but there must be a series of committeemen, committeewomen, and stewards inside the workplace to administer the contract and grievance procedure. They are the most accessible to the ranks and thus potentially the most dangerous to the bureaucracy. They have no responsibility for presenting the face or official policy of the union in public. They cannot be trusted to full authority in the grievance process. By contractual definition the international or staff representatives had to be given the power to determine with top local management the destiny of all grievances that departmental level management denied.

The on-the-job officers of the union are not immune from bureaucratic conservatism. If they are freed from the oppression of the work-process to spend full or part portions of their time at work processing grievances and handling union business, both management and the international union gets in position to cheat stewards and committeemen and committeewomen of their basic militancy. As bad as the buying and selling that goes on is, the change in in-plant union structure from that which existed during the organizing period. The early period of the union's life demands that the union have at least one key person, representative or steward for each foreman so that a maximum number of workers in every corner of the workplace get signed up and stay organized in the union. The good ratios of steward representation established in the 1930's have in major part been eliminated. Ratios as low as ont to fifteen have become as high as one to several hundred. The ranks in these instances were promised that full time stewards with their own offices and telephones in the plant would allow better

representation. Experience has shown the opposite. Their aristocratic position and impossibly large size of the workplace territories they represent negated the advantage gained in their becoming full time, along with the negation of the freedom gained by the checkoff dues system and the union shop.

Despite the estrangement caused between ranks and union workplace officials because of the number of widenings of the ratio gap, they remain the most accessible, most often challenged and changed and most important stratum of official leadership to the rank and file of the unions. It is no accident that there are few unions that provide the workplace officials with any automatic standing in the local union governmental apparatus. That government is officially controlled by the officers elected to preside over the business of the union that can be conducted outside the workplace. It is the president, vice president, etc., who are the most likely to side with the international in any conflict between the local and national center, particularly if the local is large enough to afford part or full time employment positions for one or more of its outside workplace officers. The 1967, wildcat strike of GM workers in Mansfield, Ohio, provides the classic example. The disenfranchisement of the shop stewards in turn disenfranchises the ranks. Only formal parlimentary fetishists can escape the conclusion.

The reactionary changes in union structure that began apace in the early 1940's continue to this moment. The reform of the Steel Workers grievance procedure that I. W. Abel has been promising the ranks of that union since 1965, is right now being instituted. It denies the right of the stewards to bargain with the foremen and places that right with the grievers or grievance committeemen only. This automatically changes the representation ratio from roughly 1-30 to 1-200 or more. In the face of these changes the ranks of labor are demanding a reversal. Since the early 1960's and particularly the Special Bargaining Convention of the Auto Workers in April, 1967, the demand for a ratio more like that of management or 1-15 has been in the forefront of rank and file demonstrations. The right to strike at the local level has become a major issue all over the mass production industries as the result of the upsurge in militancy. The steelworkers have not yet had the opportunity to respond to Abel's latest move. By contract, union government and ideology, the relationship of the ranks of labor in the mass production and transportation industries to their officials is today very different from that period in which most radicals last defined attitudes, long range programs, and perspectives.

4. Since the early 1940's, Americans have been a population on the move. The old ethnic and cohesive working class neighborhoods nearby the industrial workplaces have become all but extinct. Informal organization in the work process no longer has the supplemental aid from informal organization in the neighborhood. Only as racial and ethnic minorities in the central city cores gain more employment in city industry does the advantage return. Thus, on two counts separated

from changes already discussed above, the institution of the local
union using the monthly meeting to legitimize its authority has lost
much if not most of its use value and authority within the ranks of
labor. Technological change in the automotive industry combined with
high employment levels have (1) destroyed organizational formations
that were used to get increased attendance at union meetings, and (2)
has created the existence of working class suburbs that are distant
from the workplaces. Not only have they atomized former living area
concentrations, but they have made it a considerable physical and
psychological strain to get to and from union meetings in the city
core areas. With the disappearance of the "taken liberty" to meet in
mass on company property when necessary, it was the local union meet-
ing that was supposed to provide a total forum for the ranks.

Parts two and three of this document will be put into the next

Bulletin.

PROBLEMS OF, BACKGROUND TO, AND QUESTIONS FOR A LABOR PERSPECTIVE --
WITH SOME BEGINNINGS   By S. Wier

(The following is Part II of the same document. Part I appeared in
Bulletin No. 15.)

III. The Centralization of Capital and the Changes in
US Corporate Structure

5.   In 1966 a total of 98 firms with combined assets of $4 billion
were acquired by large mining and manufacturing companies. Of these,
the top 200 US industrial corporations alone acquired companies with
assets of $2.2 billion. At the end of 1964 the 20 largest manufacturing
corporations had $83 billion in assets. This was one quarter of the
total assets of all US manufacturing companies. The 200 largest firms
accounted for 57 percent and the top 1,000 for approximately 76 percent.
The Federal Trade Commission Report for 1967 estimates that if the cur-
rent merger trend of that time continued, and it has, that by 1975,
75 percent of all corporate assets in the US will be in the hands of
200 corporations. The first or top 50 of the nation's largest firms
have a power of their own. Such companies -- like GM, US Steel, Good-
year, Alcoa -- have not been engaged in a mad rush to acquire firms
that manufacture different products from their own. However, the next
100 to 150 firms have been growing in large part through joining firms
in entirely different branches of industry. Much of the growth has
come through financial manipulations, through the kind of speculation
where the opportunities for big financial gains and growing financial
power are the chief motivating factors. In other words, the mergers
have been based, not so much on gaining more efficiency, greater con-
trol of the market for particular products, expanding the company's
interest within a particular industrial domain, but rather based on
insiders, speculators and empire builders seeking new power. There is
no real transfer of skills when an aerospace firm takes over a meat-
packing or sporting goods company. Or, if a coal company combines with
one in coal. When Kennecott Copper took over Peabody Coal the owners
gained the sort of powers in cities and regions of Utah that could well
give it the power to exert domination in the legislature of that state.

Just below is the percentage of distribution of mergers by type
of merger between 1948 and 1968. The figures are from the Federal
Trade Commission Report for March, 1969.

Date	Horizontal	Vertical	Conglomerate
1948-51	42%	20%	38%
1952-55	37	10	53
1956-59	28	19	53
1960-63	12	25	63
1964-67	12	9	79
1968	4	7	89

Below is a diagram of the more than fifteen different international unions involved in collective bargaining with a classical conglomerate. The number of separate contracts geometrically exceeds the number of international unions, because different locals or groups of locals within a particular international union have different contracts.

Ling-Temco-Vought (LTV)

Braniff Airways

Airline Pilots
Teamsters
Machinists
Many unorganized

LTV Electrosystems

Auto Workers
Allied Industrial Workers
Many unorganized

LTV Aerospace

Auto Workers
Many unorganized

Wilson Pharmaceutical & Chemical

Meat Cutters
District 50
Chemical Workers

Wilson & Co.

Meat Cutters
Others unorganized

Jones & Laughlin

Steelworkers
Mine Workers
Electrical Workers (IUE)
Railroad crafts

LTV Ling Altec

Electrical Workers (IUE)
Auto Workers
Machinists

Okonite

Electrical Workers (IBEW)
Rubber Workers

Wilson Sporting Goods

Meat Cutters
Textile Workers
Chemical Workers
Clothing Workers
Teamsters
Leafer Workers

The tremendous increase in trend of conglomerate type merger listed just previous to the diagram just above has slowed somewhat since 1968, due to breakdowns in both Ling-Temco-Vaught and Lytton Industries and resulting pressures from the courts as new mergers have been applied for. Few corporations have such a spectacular collective bargaining schedule as does LTV. Hundreds of corporations, however, deal with a dozen or more unions in unrelated industries. If there is a strike in one set of sorkplaces owned by a firm of this sort, the other workplaces are free to continue to work and profit and cover strike incurred expenses. General Electric which is not so widely diversified whipsaws labor with a variation of the same tactic. It negotiates over 90 different contracts with different sets of union representatives, although some of them are in the same union. Thus, when dealing with any of the many variations of the conglomerate type corporation, the different unions or sections of unions are faced with the fact that their different contracts come due at different dates and which are administered by

union representatives not in regular communication with one another. Management picks the weakest possible union unit in order to arrive at a pattern contract and then uses that pattern to whip the rest into line.

In order to be able to check this process that so weakens the primary weapon of labor, the strike, the official union leadership at the very top has been forced to try to coordinate the efforts of all unions under contract to a single multi-corporation. The biggest single example was led by the IUE in its dealings with GE and Westinghouse. Eight and then ten other unions were brought into negotiations. The GE corporation claimed that this was coordinated bargaining and that they were not about to negotiate eleven contracts at once and walked out of negotiations. A US Circuit Court ruled in behalf of the union after the union claimed that   it was not threatening the firm with coordinated bargaining but rather coalition bargaining. In other words, the IUE was the only contract being negotiated, it was just that experts from ten other unions were aiding at the table. The court said that the corporation has always been allowed to bring anyone to the bargaining table that it choses and that labor must have the same right, and, that if in the future the Corp. could prove that the unions were actually turning coalition into coordinated bargaining that it should come to court and that the court would rectify the matter. The coalition development was progress, but the unions are forced to go through the hoop again and again at great financial and energy expense. And this is one big successful example of the development. Only in one or two instances has the Industrial Union Department of the AFL-CIO, formerly headed by Walter Reuther and now headed by I. W. Abel, been able to get four or five unions together and negotiate a single contract expiration date for them. Since the UAW left the AFL-CIO the IUD has declined in strength. The crisis remains, compounded by the development of the multi-national type corporation which requires international coordination of the bargaining process, again by the present labor officialdom, if the unions are going to maintain their bargaining strength at no more than present levels.

The multi-national corporation is not a small additional problem for the labor leadership. Already it is a major one, but inseparable from that created by the development of the conglomerate. The IUD publication Viewpoint (Summer, 1971) estimates that foreign operations "accounted for at least one quarter of sales, earnings, and assets, or employees of 80 of the top 200 US corporations at the end of 1970." In that year they produced an estimated $200 billion worth of goods and services overseas. In the 20 years from 1950 to 1969, the value of US investments abroad increased almost fivefold, from $31.5 billion in 1950 to $143.4 billion in 1969. $108 billion was private investment. $70 billion of that amount was direct investment by US based multi-national corporations in subsidiaries abroad. Much of the latter amount was in mining, smelting, and petroleum, but $30 billion was in manufacturing -- a threefold increase in a decade.

The centralization of capital was but one of the major factors allow-
ing this growth. New transportation technology now enables the swift
movement of producers goods, machinery, and technical skills over
great distances. On top of that the development of instant communi-
cation systems have made possible the centralization of decision mak-
ing by the new giants. In fact, the more that the corporations have
spread out on an international scale the more the power of decision
making within them has been centralized. With their new world view it
is easy for them to pick the country in which they can produce goods
at the lowest costs and to pick the country in which to declare pro-
fits because of low taxes.

To organize all the major workplaces owned by a corporation with-
in the US and Canada is no longer sufficient even for the needs of
the labor bureaucracy. The new mobility and flexibility of the cor-
porations threatens the ability of the officialdom to produce for the
ranks at the present levels of success -- in the main, in the area
of numerical wages and fringes. The loss of jobs to foreign countries
poses still greater threat to their power base. In sum, the very
basis on which they have maintained their position in the tripartite
arrangement they established between themselves, the employers, and
government bureaucrats is being chipped away.

If the present official labor leadership is to make a beginning
at a solution of the crisis presented to them by the development of
conglomerate and multi-national corporations, they will have to make
considerable changes in the structural, governmental, and administra-
tive forms of the unions they lead. If they do, it is highly impro-
bable that they will on their own make efforts to increase the levels
of rank and file participation. The real likelihood is, that if left
to themselves, they will attempt to parallel corporate change and fur-
ther centralize the decision making processes within the total union
structure. The big questions are: Will rank and file militants
simply counterpunch by only putting obstacles in the path of the
changes, offering no alternatives to the present structure? Or,
will they take the opportunity to fight for long overdue changes in
institutional forms from bottom to top of the unions, changes that
centralize the power of the working class through structural forms
and procedures that demand -- for their very success -- the full par-
ticipation of the rank and file?

6. Unlike the 1930's and due to the changes indicated just above
in regard to the globalization of American capitalism, for the first
time in American working class history there are objective conditions
present which demand that American workers develop a consciousness of
their international role. And, which further demand that American
workers become leaders in establishing international solidarity if
they are to obtain a progressive solution to their problems. The
direct interrelationship between Nixon's floating of the American
dollar on foreign exchanges together with the imposition of the ten

percent surcharge at the end of last summer, and the imposition of
wage-price controls based on productivity deals -- wedding interna-
tional and domestic crisis for all to see -- is to date the most dra-
matic testimony to this fact. American employers through the Nixon
administration have provided the nation with its first national (strug-
gle) issue since the Great Depression and at the same time provided the
first international crisis which has made clear that American labor is
a commodity on the international labor market.

7. In the 1930's and right through World War II there was a wide-
spread sense of national inferiority among Canadian workers. They re-
sented being far more aware of US politics than Americans were of
theirs. Sensing that they were still to a degree under the domination
of England they resented higher levels of material consumption just
across the border. It was common to hear Canadian workers hold forth
for the elimination of the border and the creation of one big country.
They knew it would bring a quick expansion of American capital and an
increase in jobs. (It should be remembered that Canada remained in
the depths of the Great Depression right up to her entry into World
War II.

In the post-World War II period and the US domination of England
on a world basis, the American corporations moved into Canada full
scale without respect to border. Today, the economies of Canada and
the US are inseparably intertwined. A social crisis in one is auto-
matically transferred to the other. The high degree of industrializa-
tion in contemporary Canada has given its working class a sense of its
own power. There is the new militancy of the French-Canadians and of
Canadian youth and workers in general. It has reached a point wherein
the official journal of the Canadian Department of Labor publishes an
analysis of, "The Coming Youth Revolt in Labor."* The attitudes of in-
dependence and self determination are by no means limited to the French-
Canadians. Under these circumstances Canadian workers are no longer
tail-ending Americans in any way. In fact, there can be no doubt that
in many areas they will be supplying new ideas that American workers
would do well to study, adapt, and emulate. Out of a sense of solidar-
ity and self interest American unions have to cease bureaucratic dom-
ination of Canadian unions. Any marching together that occurs in the
future must come out of an equal partner relationship. American radi-
cals know little of Canadian politics, labor, and society in general.
The elimination of that condition would be of great value to the Amer-
ican working class and for the IS and is the first step toward creat-
ing an alliance with a Canadian socialist organization whose politics
are close to that of the IS.

It is now possible for American militants to take concrete actions
to aid their Canadian brothers and sisters. As the result of rank and
file pressures for independence, in the summer of 1970 the Canadian
Labor Congress adopted a series of guidelines for the pursuance of
autonomy. Last summer the Canadian Caucus of the International Bro-
therhood of Pulp, Sulphite and Papermill Workers, AFL-CIO, in the

*The Labour Gazette, November, 1971.

latest of a series of Canadian union bids for autonomy, went to the
international convention and proposed: (1) that only Canadian dele-
gates elect the three Canadian vice presidents, (2) that a per capita
levy on Canadians be administered by the union's Canadian director
rather than the union's US officers, (3) that the Canadian director be
authorized to approve Canadian contracts, and (4) that a supplementary
strike fund be established in Canada. The 1,200 convention delegates
rebuffed the Canadian caucus on all four proposals. This strengthened
the position of rebel locals like the one in Gatineau, Quebe, that are
seeking near complete independence. The Canadian mills are largely
American owned. Like most, this example demonstrates that unity against
the employers cannot be had without a bull expansion of democracy to
the Canadians.

The Canadian pulp and sulphite union has wired Nixon protesting
wage controls, the surtax, and has come out for merger of their union
with the United Papermakers and the Printing Pressmen.

8. American society has only experienced a small fraction of the
social change that automation must inevitably bring to it. We have
but to look backward. The introduction of the assembly line into
American industry on a mass basis did not begin in the 1930's, but as
early as the opening years of World War I in Europe (1914). By the
mid-1920's, assembly lines had finally created a large enough number
of semi-skilled jobs to create a base for industrial unionism. Until
that time the concept of industrial unionism was the property of vis-
ionaries. Regardless of all the education to the idea accomplished
by socialists like Eugene Debs and by the Wobblies, the workers who
could benefit by industrial unionism did not have the power to make
the idea a reality.

In the further expansion of industry during and after American
participation in World War I, the idea no longer needed to remain an
abstraction. Three more ingredients were needed, however, before in-
dustrial unions would be able to appear and then stabilize their exis-
tnece nationally. A societal shock was needed to jar the feelings,
ideas and consciousness to an extent wherein American could to an ex-
tent free themselves to break with the routine, traditions, values,
institutions, and ideas upon which they had been operating up to that
time. The Great Depression of 1929 provided that shock, the break in
the continuities and the release that allowed workers to begin creative
construction of new institutions. Independently organized industrial
union locals formed by rank and file workers, who had the historical
day before been in bread lines, made their appearance with the first
upturns in employment in 1932. Through the Twenties and before, they
had endured the disruption, exhaustion, and anxieties that assembly
line methods brought to their lives without being able to retaliate
openly or on large scale. To do this they not only had to establish

their union securely at the level of the workplace, but had to reach
out to obtain economic and social solidarity with the workers in other
workplaces of the same industry. An entire communications network had
to be created. To accomplish this the workers needed to very rapidly
acquire the second ingredient: a source of writing, legal and other
technical skills. It was ready and available in the radicalized sec-
tions of the middle class. Freed to leave their class mainly by the
Russian Revolution and the plague of unemployment that had hit the mid-
dle classes with the "Crash of 1929," in hundreds and hundreds of in-
dustrial cities large and small, intellectuals made themselves abail-
able to the industrial union revolution. Although radical political
organizations many times played a role in this development, it was not
done on the basis of national directives from either the side of the
workers or intellectuals. Workers at a workplace rebelled and began
to set up a union. They sought to expand upon their resources within
their general community. Who made the first contact with who is not
now important to the discussion. What is vital here is that the basis
for what was to become an industrial union network that stretched
over the US and Canada, began with independent alliances between work-
ers and radicalized intellectuals on a city for city and region for
region basis. By 1935, the workers together with the intellectuals
had proven the viability of industrial unionism to a point that allowed
a section of the labor bureaucracy to recognize its viability. John
L. Lewis, the leader of the only large fully industrial union on this
continent had found his position unstable due to his inability to de-
liver larger amounts for his ranks. He needed the existence of unions
in steel in particular and they had to be unions his union could easily
deal with. In other words, they had to be single unit unions within
each workplace rather than a complexity of different craft unions.
The climate of the 1930's was one of change for everyone, but specif-
ically for John L. Lewis a crisis had been created by the semi-skilled
workers. Rebellions and revolts in the steel plants had already
forced the steel companies to improve wages and conditions to a degree
in the hope of keeping unions out or coopting the newly formed unions
that had just appeared. The coal operators were in too many instances
losing numbers of their labor force to the nearby mills. Lewis was
thereby freed to seek new ideas. The new independent and often fed-
erally chartered locals secured by the worker-intellectual alliance
demonstrated to the practical old bureaucrat the workability of indus-
trial unionism in mass production and transportation. Through him,
the coal miners of America provided the third ingredient that was
needed in order to establish industrial unionism on the part of the
North American continent officially dominated by Anglo-Saxon law, tra-
dition, and values: the funds and personnel to create a national or-
ganizational structure in the US and Canada. When Lewis and the cadre
of young organizers with which he had surrounded himself inside the
AFL's Committee for Industrial Organization walked out of the old
federation's convention to set up the independent Congress of Indus-
trial Organizations, it signalled the end of the automatic domination
of the aristocratic building trades unions over organized labor.
Hutcheson of the Carpenter's Union would no longer be able to publicly

and politically function as if America contained only workers that had
served long apprenticeships.

We know that the combination of new levels of mechanization and
computer science which have come to be identified as automation have
caused and will cause more technological unemployment and dislocation.
We know that automation deskills workers, technicians, and profession-
als. Those realities have been harped on by liberals and radicals to
the point where they bore the listeners or readers of liberal and rad-
ical publications. To continue to simply agitate against the negative
results is to make humdrum cliche of tragedy. What are the feelings
and attitudes of Canadians and Americans who have experienced automa-
tion or who sense that automation could soon reach into and disrupt
life in their workplaces? What shocks have occurred and what have they
broken loose? Is it possible that the terror of automation exists
without at the same time freeing the thinking of those who experience
it to consider new ideas that involve basic institutional change?
What new ideas are already being "batted around" among the past, pre-
sent, and future victims of automation? What new ideas does the new
objective-subjective condition call forth for possible testing that
have not as yet been articulated or conceptualized? Does automation
present the possibility for the creation of new vehicles for social
change as did the mass introduction of assembly line techniques?
Charles R. Walker, author of American City (Minneapolis General Strike,
1934) and co-author of Man on the Assembly Line, claims that when a
workplace changes from labor intensive to capital intensive or contin-
uous process techniques there is a consequent change in the attitudes
of the workers" they want to increase their powers of participation
in the workplace decision making processes.* What other possible
positive conditions are created by automation? If analyzed, might
they not bring a quality of hope to the content of underlying despair
that now characterizes the socialist and new left press including
Workers' Power.

Only small amounts of condemnation of "what is" can be digested in
the absence of ideas about "what could be." Has automation, for ex-
ample, done anything to create the basis for a new allinace between
sections of the working and middle classes? If so, why, on what magni-
tude and level and what type or types of organizational vehicle are n
needed to make it operationally progressive and stable? If we can
come up with some potential answers to these questions we will devel-
op the ability to stimulate enthusiasm among our public and among
ourselves.

*See Walker's article, "Life in the Automatic Factory," Harvard Busi-
ness Review, Vol. 36 (Jan.-Feb., 1958), pp. 111-119.

THE RANK FILE (INFORMAL) WORK GROUP

Its Dynamics Within Union-Organized Industry

By Ken Michaels with S. Wier

(A supplement to "Problems of, Background to, and Questions for a Labor Perspective -- With Some Beginnings" by S. Wier)

Recent development in American labor have struck a decisive blow against the myth of the "satisfied" and "affluent" worker and have silenced those in the midst of proclaiming a new age of "industrial peace," or, as Daniel Bell express it, the "Welfare State of the Proletariat."[1] Beginning with the slowdowns and walkouts in steel in the early 1950's and the wildcat contract rejections that have plagued auto since 1955, the rising militancy of the rank and file has manifested itself in almost every corner of American industry. The Philadelphia Teamsters wildcat of 1965, which saw guerrilla warfare by truckers on the Pennsylvania highways; the San Francisco painters revolt of the same year, which ended only with the assasination of its leaders, Dow Wilson; the unofficial strikes of the Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio coal miners in 1965-66; the airline mechanics' five week strike in 1966, continued in the face of industry, union, and government pressures against it.

These are just a few of the eruptions that signalled the end of what had appeared to be an era of worker apathy during the "fabulous fifties." In addition, the scores of localized revolts forced changes in the top offices of half a dozen unions, including the United Steel Workers, International Union of Electrical Workers, United Rubber Workers, and the American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees. There is not now a major union that has not had its experience with the "new" attitudes of the ranks. There has been a disappearance of the old work ethic. Contract rejections remain high. Wildcat and "quickie" strikes are commonplace. In private industry the workers have found that the rebellion forms they tried in the 1960's did not force their leadership to move to the degree necessary to make the fights that would again make their unions effective against the employers. Dissatisfaction remains, awaiting the development of new methods of struggle to force union officials to lead, and come up with bold new programs, or move out of the way. Wage controls have not intimidated any section of the workers. In the public sector a new dimension has been added to the class struggle. To win straight union demands, city employees in New York and San Francisco in the last two years have conducted near general strikes. Moreover, professional and white collar workers, including symphony musicians, museum workers, telephone workers, and teachers, plus postal and other federal employees are forming unions in struggles that rival those of the 1930's. The drive to unionize includes even policemen.[2] It has become increasingly clear that, while some of these rank and file rebellions have contained demands for higher wages, many of them have not, and the principal demands have been for better working conditions and against speedup, layoffs, and compulsory overtime. In those cases where the wage issue was important, as in the airline mechanics strike, the demand is more often than not for simple parity and equity with similar occupations in other industries, or for a raise to offset inflation.[3]

While most of these labor insurgencies have been duly reported in the national press, coverage has largely ended at the headline. Little attempt has been made to analyze either the detailed or overall structure of these revolts. Both the union leadership and the intellectual community around it have remained so it seems strangely silent.[4] In fact, however, the silence is not so strange, for the recent

revolts in labor have brought into relief the fact that the unions, with their
enormous press, and the industrial social scientists, with all their research,
have produced a relatively tiny body of literature which deals with the actual or-
ganization of a strike or even a union. The union press, says a major labor his-
torian, exists chiefly to "glorify the leaderships in power and to defend their
policies. Their historical value is chiefly as a source of viewpoints, policies,
and official programs advanced by union leaders."[5] The majority of industrial
sociologists remain wedded to the concepts of "industrial democracy," which sees
management and union working out their differences in a friendly fashion, or at
least well-manneredly, over the collective bargaining table and through the griev-
ance procedure.[6] Clearly, in this framework there is little room for wildcats,
slowdowns, and other direct action forms of struggle.

       Literature dealing with the sociology of the strike, such as it exists, seems
to confirm the idea, illustrated by the recent strike waves, that, contrary to pop-
ular viewpoint, it is issues of working conditions, line speed (or its equivalent),
and job security, including seniority, that are uppermost in the strikers' minds.
In Alvin Gouldner's Wildcat Strike, written in 1954, and the only work of its kind,
the strike was initially caused largely by a change in supervisory management that
created hostility among the plant's workers by breaking up established working
patterns. The fact that the wage issue assumed some real importance as the strike
went on, Gouldner puts to largely outside and structural pressures; the demand for
higher wages tended to pacify wives and creditors, it unified the various unsatis-
fied elements of the plant, it was a more easily handled factor to bargain with
management for, and it tended to give the strike more legitimacy in the eyes of the
union bureaucracy.[7]

       Bernard Karsh's unique work, Diary of a Strike, deals with a somewhat differ-
ent situation in which a plant is organized from the outside by a member of the
staff of a large AFL union. In this particular instance, the wage scale of the
company was far below par, and the fact that this was forcing down wage scales
generally in the area led to the organizing drive by the union. However, even in
this case, where the wage issue was decidedly central, it was not the deciding
factor for many of the workers who joined the union and supported the strike. De-
spite the relatively high importance of the wage issue, as compared to other strike
situations, gripes about rough treatment from the supervisors, lack of job security,
and the general run-around given a grieving worker were just as important to rally-
ing the workers behind the union.[8]

       Even more revealing in Karsh's book is the fact that, far more than their own
beliefs in the issues, the larger section of the rank and file rallied to the
union in support of certain key respected leaders who had decided to join the
union. These individuals had been work group leaders long before the union began
the organizing drive, and their unofficial power accorded them in the plant by the
other workers was an essential factor in the organization and maintenance of union
support.[9]

       This suggests that central to each worker's mind was not a particular issue
or set of issues as such, but rather a desire to conform to the decisions of his or
her informal work group and, by extension, the decisions of that group's infor-
mally delegated spokespersons. In Gouldner's study, in fact, it was the attempt
of the supervisors to take over the control that the workers considered within
the bounds of their own informal organizational structure that caused the primary
tensions.

While Karsh's and Gouldner's studies deal only with workers under special stress conditions, there is ample evidence in other academic studies to suggest strongly that the discipline of the informal work groups has a major affect on day-to-day relations on the shop floor. Ever since the Hawthorne Experiments at Chicago Western Electric in the nineteen-twenties and thirties, sociologists of the management dominated "worker satisfaction" school have come to the conclusion that worker participation in decision-making is necessary to maintain and increase worker morale. Attempts to achieve this within the management framework have not succeeded too well, however; at a certain point the autonomy of the workers begins to threaten "management's rights" and the experiment ends.[10] This leaves open the question of the real potential of the organizational powers of the work group, but has proven fairly conclusively that, as far as it has been allowed to function, it can easily take over the work area functions of management. Another factor contributing to the failure of management-worker relations schemes is that workers prefer to be left alone to do their work without interference from management, even if it is presented as a helping hand:

"Just as the factory worker, when he was at school, regarded the teachers as management and went on strike or slowdown against their well-intentioned or class-biased efforts, so in the factory he does not take the glad hand held out by the personnel department. Indeed, while the manager believes that high production attests high morale, the opposite may be the case. . . . if the workers feel united in solidarity and mutual understanding -- which they would define as 'high morale' -- the conditions exist for facilitating slowdowns and the systematic punishment of rate-busters."[11]

The system by which the work group disciplines its members is complicated and often very subtle. The principal weapon is social isolation. Those who won't go along with the group have no one to talk to, joke, or eat with. They are barred from the shop grapevine that often has important news. The work shortcuts learned by other workers over the years will remain unknown to them. Further, they or he or she will receive little help from management, who will note their lack of co-operation with other workers and frown upon their inability to "get along" with the majority, thus unconsciously aiding the work group in its restriction of output. The non-conformer(s), working under the hostile gaze of both peers and management, finds work far more difficult and unrewarding. In the end, the "rate-buster" often ends up earning less than the members who have jointly restricted their output, and paradoxically, his or her level of output sometimes falls below the norm.[12] In order to assure a steady rate of production and thus escape the scrutiny of the higher-ups, the foremen or forewomen will often aid the workers in production restriction, and in this way they serve as a buffer between the work group and the rest of management, and secure the rule of the work group over its own production.[13]

The reason for restriction of work output is not limited to the desire to maintain levels of incentive pay. Output restriction discipline serves much more than a purely economic function. The function of discipline within the work group takes on a social tone as well, as the comment of a worker will attest:

"Sure, I think most of us would admit that we could double our take home if we wanted to shoot the works, but where's the percentage? A guy has to get something out of life. Now my little lady would rather have me in a good humor than have the extra money. The way it work out none of us are going to be Van-Asterbilts so why not get a little pleasure out of living together and working together."[14]

From the standpoint of the worker, the control by the work group of production is closely wound up with wage stability, job security, working conditions, social interaction, relationship to management, work satisfaction, and even psychological satisfaction. There is no clear line that can be drawn among the actions of the work group or among the factors they affect. It is for this reason that any encroachment by management which severely attacks the patterns of authority traditionally established by the work group can cause an incident or conflict which has the potential to spread to all areas of friction in the shop, and cause a considerable lowering of shop morale.

To protect itself from such attacks from the company management, the work group uses a variety of devices, the most visible of which is the union. The union is formed when the work group realizes a common area of interest exists with other work groups. Having established this bond, the work group does not disappear into the larger grouping of the union, but maintains its autonomy. The work group's relationship to the union is described by a team of top government labor analysts:

> "Our observations suggest that participation in formal union activity -- such as attendance at meetings, voting in elections, and serving in office -- is not the full measure of awareness and interest on the part of the membership; that on the contrary, these formal activities, although carried on by only a few of the members, are outward manifestations of an interest and awareness of union affairs of most of the shop society. The so-called 'active members' who participate in union affairs are also in close touch with the rest of their fellows in the shop. There is no organized selection of the active participants, but they are in fact representatives of the whole group, and so we call them 'informal representatives.' The shop society and the union organization are related to each other through the informal representation of the members in the shop by the active participants in formal union affairs."[17]

This reveals that formal participation in union activities is only one area of real shop interest, and hardly the best indicator. Far more revealing, however, is the fact that the average rank and filer receives his or her information by way of shop talk with his or her informal work group and its informal representatives to the union. This tends to color the workers' evaluation of union policies not by their effect on the union as a whole so much as on their effect upon his or her work group. Another set of industrial relations analysts believe that the views of a worker toward the policies of his or her own work group were far more important than his or her views of the union:

> "It was quite clearly understood in each of these factories that a man might think as he pleased about labor union organization, but that he must conform to the commonly accepted pattern of output restriction."[18]

The point is even clearer in light of the fact that the union in question was working with management to break down the output restriction system.[19]

A split of interests along work group lines within the union occurs repeatedly at contract negotiation time. In his article "Fractional Bargaining Patterns and Wildcat Strikes," David R. Hampton explains this process:

> "Bargaining by work groups and subsections of management or fractional bargaining as the process is sometimes called, arises because the divergent aspirations and powers of multiple units within complex unions and corporations

meet over issues about which there is disagreement. These dynamics exist within collective bargaining relationships and are analytically separable from them."[20]

Further,

"Slowdowns and wildcat strikes may also be viewed as tactical variations in the exercise of power by work groups in fractional bargaining. Inasmuch as the containment of disruptive tactics is a necessary sub-goal for bargaining relationships which are to continue, identification of factors which condition work groups to engage in disruptions poses a problem of general interest."[21]

It is clear that for the union leadership to effectively negotiate a contract, sell it to the workers, and maintain its enforcement for its duration, the power of the fractional bargaining units, that is, the work groups, must be broken. The process by which leaders of troublesome work groups are weeded out, often enough with the help of management, is as old as industrial unionism itself, as this case study from Golden and Ruttenberg's The Dynamics of Industrial Democracy indicates:

"On Sunday, March 2, 1941, Stanley Orlosky, life-long union worker, a pipe fitter in a steel mill, was expelled from the union after a trial on charges of 'violation of obligation to the Steel Workers Organizing Committee. . . The talking for which Stanley was fired consisted of charging the incumbent union officers with 'selling the men down the river . . .' Stanley's leadership was essential to the establishment of the union against bitter resistance, but after it had been fully accepted by management such leadership was a handicap to the development of co-operative union-management relations."[22]

This process of elimination of "irresponsible" elements of rank and file leadership does indeed promote industrial "peace" of a sort, but at the cost to the union of undermining the very base of its support, the power of the work group and the authority of its leaders. Authority within the union, therefore, must be transferred bureaucratically to the upper stratum of union officialdom, an action which facilitates the negotiation of a uniform contract, but also creates a political and social cleavage between the ranks and the bureaucrats. In order to maintain support or even acceptance among the ranks in the absence of a real political and social base, the bureaucracy of American unions have increasingly adopted a stance of pressing for the most broadly based, tangible, and easily negotiated demands, principally those centered around wages, vacations, and fringe benefits. In the period 1939-1960 the tremendous rise of national productivity made it comparatively easy to gain such demands, and the atomization of traditional work groups during World War II and the atmosphere of political repression during and after the Korean War kept rank and file resistance at a minimum. As the following quote from David McDonald, former president of the United Steel Workers, illustrates, the myth of the generally satisfied but wage-conscious worker was solidly entrenched in the uppermost section of the union bureaucracy:

"I found solace in the conviction that the impact of almost forty-two years of a philosophy learned at the knee of John Lewis and administered first with Phil Murray and then on my own could never be lost on the workingmen of the steel industry. That was my satisfaction -- that and the knowledge that there was little left to seek for my steelworkers except periodic wage adjustments. We'd done it all . . . . I knew I was reaching, and therefore

I knew also that the Steelworkers had achieved just about everything a
union could provide them under Murray and me."[23]

In this light, the present period of rank and file revolt in organized labor can be
seen as an attempt by the rank and file work groups that have reconstituted them-
selves since the late 1950's to regain some of the power and authority they lost with-
in organized industry under thirty years of bureaucratic leadership. This struggle
is an absolutely necessary one for industrial workers, who have been experiencing a
marked decline in working conditions and real hourly wages in the last ten years, and
increasing unemployment in the last five, a set of conditions which the present union
leadership and institution of unionism has been ineffective in fighting. The "new
era of labor revolt" is likely to continue until it places into union office a lead-
ership which concerns itself more with the needs and demands of the work group than
with the sanctity of the collective agreement with management. And, this is impos-
sible given the present structure and government of the unions, given the present
government of contracts, the compulsory arbitration of grievances, and unconditional
no-strike pledges. The pattern of the rank and file revolts indicates that insti-
tutions as well as the people who lead them will have to be changed and that the
process will take place on a scale as broad as, if not broader than, the upheavals
that formed the industrial unions in the nineteen thirties.

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FOOTNOTES

1. Barbash, Unions and Union Leadership, p. 46.
2. Weir, New Era of Labor Revolt, and Jacobs, UAW Settles with Ford (1967).
3. Weir, New Era of Labor Revolt, p. 3.
4. Ibid., pp. 19-20.
5. Preis, Labor's Giant Step, p. 522.
6. See Blumberg, Industrial Democracy, and McDonald, Union Man.
7. Gouldner, Wildcat Strike, p. 34-37.
8. Karsh, Diary of a Strike, pp. 29-45　　　9. Ibid.
10. See Zalesnik, Workers Satisfaction and Development.
11. Reisman, The Lonely Crowd, p. 107.
12. Collins, Restriction of Output, pp. 9-12.　　13. Ibid.　　14. Ibid.
15. Homans, The Human Group, pp. 112-113.
16. Whyte, The Organization Man.
17. Kovner, Shop Society and the Union, p. 2.
18. Collins, op. cit., p. 8.　　　　　　　19. Ibid., p. 7.
20. Hampton, Fractional Bargaining, p. 100.　　　21. Ibid.
22. Golden, Dynamics of Industrial Democracy, pp. 60-61.
23. McDonald, Union Man, p. 324.

WHAT'S WRONG WITH WORKERS' POWER? by Charles Leinenweber

The IS's turn toward the working class has meant a dramatic change in the priorities of our newspaper. Where we once thought of ourselves as part of the student left, our aspirations now are to become a legitimate part of the working class movement. Where we once published our paper for a campus milieu, we now intend it for a working class audience.

The transformation of our paper is no easy matter. It is as difficult and uncertain as the transformation of the IS itself. We must expect to make many mistakes with the paper--we are still in the midst of a long process of feeling out ourselves and our audience, and under such circumstances mistakes come freely and naturally. We should feel no embarassment or defensiveness in working through them.

We now have a year-and-a-half's worth of experience in putting out Workers' Power, however, and by now certain of our mistakes appear with such regularity, that if we don't do something about them, they may become permanent. What we write tells a lot about us, as individuals and collectively, as an organization. Workers' Power tells who we are and who we want to reach, what we are doing and want to do, what we think about and how we think. If only for these reasons, it should be the best paper we can produce.

Workers' Power: Writer and Audience.

We write and publish Workers' Power with certain goals in mind. Among other things, we want to inspire people with our critiques of capitalist society and imperialism. We feel we have some things to say that are different from what others are saying, we have ideas that have real power, and we want to spread them.

But there is more to writing than simply putting ideas on a piece of paper. First of all, you must know who you are. Writing is self-expression; if you don't know who you are, you will discover you have nothing to say, and can make no claim on anyone's patience to read what you've written. Secondly, you must know who you are writing for. The relationship between audience and writer is an extremely delicate one--each must know the other.

Who are we when we write for Workers' Power? Who makes up our audience? Are we "workers"? Are we "the vanguard"? Is our audience supposed to be made up of "workers"? New York member Brian M. (IS Bulletin No. 9) suggests that we should think of our audience as including "young workers (male, female, black, Latino, etc.), women in motion, blacks more generally, and students..."

Whatever you may think of these as images of the newspaper's general audience, they do not and cannot work for the individual writers who create the content of the paper. No writer can sit down and think "I am going to write for women in motion," or "I think I'll do this one for blacks in general." A writer needs a more definite view of his or her audience. If you try to write for an abstraction, you will end up with an article directed to no person or group in particular, one automatically devoid of any human content and any possibility for impact.

"ENABLING MOTION"
by Stan

Motion: That in addition to coming out for the right to strike at the local level, the IS raise the slogans:

For the rejection of All Contracts Containing Unconditional No Strike Pledges.

For an End to the Compulsory Arbitration of Grievances.

Elaboration, explanation and motivation: This is an enabling motion, both for our own operation neatness and clarity and to supply the ranks of labor with much needed information that will allow them to stand up to the bureaucracy in debate, that is, to arm them with some facts. The workers in some industries have become victims of the myth that there is no precedent for contracts containing the right to strike at the local level or with a conditional strike clause. Some have even been sold that the alternative to the present type of contract (containing the unconditional no strike pledge) is no contract at all.

There are many kinds of conditional no strike pledges. Some contract reserve the right right to strike over a failure to reach an aggreement on wages, others over failure of an arbitrator to reach a decision, others still over a changed job rate, over production standards disputes, failure of an employer to contribute the required percentage of payroll to pension or other funds, or because management has sued for money over an unauthorized work stoppage. Reservation of a number of kinds can be made for any number of crisis areas INCLUDING INCENTIVE PAY AND OUTSIDE CONTRACTING OF WORK BELONGING TO THE WORKERS BARGAINING UNIT, providing of course the workers are united within their union and are strong enough to stand up behind the demand. There is precedent for conditional pledges in all the areas listed above.

Probably the most common reservation is that one connected with the grievance procedure. In its agricultural implement dept, the UAW has a number of contracts as has the IUE and the Allied Industrial Workers, which provide the right to strike AFTER the grievance procedure has been fulfilled short of arbitration on those grievances not stipulated for arbitration. In short, to arbitrate or to strike is a decision that the local union can make. The Intl. Harvester workers contract allows strike procedings to begin after management has given the union its answer in the second step of the grievance procedure and that is a very strong point.

The joker in the UAW contracts, however, is that the strike must have the sanction of the International and so almost everything gained by having a conditional clause is lost.

A second joker in this type of contract is the amount of time in the notice that must be given before strike. Some contracts require up to 30 days. The UAW requires 4.

The goal for the ranks of American labor has to be the elimination of bans on the right to strike during the life of a contract, or just the reverse of the direction in of the trend over the last decade. Unconditional no strike pledges were contained in 48% of all contracts in 1960. It went to 53% in 1965, and to 57% in 1970.

Summation: There is existing precedent for contracts containing the right to strike during the life of a contract over particular reservation(s).

The exact language of the UAW Ag. Implement contracts, for example, could be used by ommitting the phrase demanding that the International union give its sanction.

The number of days notice could be shortened to whatever time the negotiators are forced to select. As little as 24 hours is possible even in industries like steel and glass, all that is necessary is that skeleton crews remain inside long enough to bank the furnaces or ovens. For this period, 24 hours is a good transitional figure in most instances.

The UAW Ag. Implement clause allowing strike after the management answer at the second step is hard to improve upon contracturaliy, in fact, impossible to imporve upon.

At the present time the consciousness of the ranks on this question is limited by a lack of information. If it is possible for us to supply a number with a working knowledge of how to raise these demands for the right to strike at the local level in an informed way, being able to supply the details as well as the basic slogan of the right to strike at the local level, we will have participated in helping to turn the tide in this area of contraact bargaining. Once the turn occurs new kinds of escalation are possible out of the conscious expansion of what it is possible to do.

At present there are few unions winning more than 25% of the grievances they put into the expensive arbitration procedure before arbitrators who cannot know what life on the job is like for a day or a lifetime. Above is the way to make arbitration voluntary and to keep arbitrators from getting rich.

Addendum to Motion: That these slogans, in the main motion be raised in connection with the current steel negotiations.

(The recommended details of a conditional strike clause as outlined above are not included in the motion due to differences from industry to industry. In each case this sort of detail of necessity must be arrived at after discussion with our friends in each industry and in full consideration of their recommendations and decision.)